

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 1

Project / Unit: Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): ME

Congressional District(s): ME-1

Location: York and Cumberland Counties

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	200	\$2,000,000
Acquired to Date	5,690	\$27,769,190
Remaining to be Acquired	8,994	\$89,940,000

Project Description:

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1966 in cooperation with the State of Maine to protect valuable salt marshes and estuaries for migratory birds. Located along 50 miles of coastline in York and Cumberland Counties, the Refuge consists of eleven Divisions stretching from Kittery to Cape Elizabeth. The proximity of the Refuge to the coast and its location between the eastern deciduous forest and the boreal forest creates a biodiverse composition of plants and animals not found elsewhere in Maine. Major habitat types present on the Refuge include forested upland, barrier beach/dune, coastal meadows, tidal salt marsh, and the distinctive rocky coast. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, fishing, hunting, photography, and kayaking for the growing and increasingly diverse and more urban population of southern Maine and summer visitors.

Purpose / Need:

The Refuge’s land acquisition strategy is to acquire lands that will enhance coastal resilience and allow for salt marsh migration inland—a phenomenon already evident within the Gulf of Maine—and to protect the watersheds that serve as catchment basins for the seven tidal rivers that traverse the Refuge.

The Service has identified three parcels, totaling 120 acres, that enhance the protection of Refuge tidal river watersheds and associated salt marshes while providing room for salt marsh migration inland. The marshes are in the York River, Brave Boat Harbor, and Spurwink River Divisions and provide roosting and foraging habitat for the Federally listed as endangered roseate tern and the State listed as endangered least tern, while providing habitat for the saltmarsh sparrow (at risk species) and for wintering waterfowl, including American black duck, red breasted merganser, and Canada goose.

The Service has also identified two parcels, totaling 80 acres, that encompass part of the headwaters of the Little River in the Biddeford Division. The parcels are comprised of wetlands, vernal pools, and riparian habitat and are within a 500-acre undeveloped habitat block. The properties provide winter foraging habitat and warm season nesting habitat for waterfowl and provide diverse habitat for migratory birds. Acquisition will enhance public recreation opportunities, including wildlife observation, hunting, and fishing.

Cooperator(s):

Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (a partnership among national and local land trusts including the York, Kittery, and Great Works Regional Land Trusts).

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$2,500

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs include maintenance and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 2

Project / Unit: Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): TX

Congressional District(s): TX-15, TX-28, TX-34

Location: South Texas: Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	940	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	104,675	\$86,894,343
Remaining to be Acquired	26,885	\$69,528,300

Project Description:

The Lower Rio Grande Valley (Valley) region has lost approximately 95 percent of its native Tamaulipan thornscrub habitat due to agriculture, urban expansion, and industrial development, and 99 percent of the native vegetation in riparian areas has been destroyed. Hoping to connect and protect these isolated tracts of habitat, the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1979 with a management priority to protect biodiversity. As a wildlife corridor, the Refuge follows the Rio Grande along the last 275 river miles, connecting isolated tracts of land managed by private landowners, non-profit organizations, the State of Texas, and two other National Wildlife Refuges: Laguna Atascosa and Santa Ana. During migration, birds from the Central and Mississippi Flyways converge in the Valley. Where possible, migrating birds avoid flying too far east (over the Gulf Coast) or too far west (over the desert) and end up funneling through this region. In addition, many birds from South and Central America reach the northernmost point of their range on the Rio Grande with some species literally not migrating any farther north than the river. In addition, the Valley is where four climates (temperate, desert, coastal, and sub-tropical) converge. The 365-day growing season and rich soils of the Rio Grande delta have resulted in over 1,200 plant species within the Valley. This plant diversity attracts and supports a diversity of wildlife, birds, and butterflies that depend on the vegetation that can only be found here in the United States. The Refuge supports 18 Federally listed endangered or threatened species, including the ocelot, peregrine falcon, and Kemp’s ridley sea turtle. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, such as wildlife viewing, photography, and hunting.

Purpose / Need:

With this appropriation, the Service will acquire the final 940 acres of a 1,284-acre tract. Acquisition of the property expands protection for endangered species, such as the ocelot, and for native species, such as white-tailed deer, bobcats, chachalacas, and great kiskadees, along with a variety of migratory bird species. Approximately 120 acres of the property contains undisturbed native brush, and the remainder is former farmland, with irrigable acreage. Restored areas will provide increased vegetative and wildlife species. Acquisition will expand

public recreational opportunities, such as hunting, wildlife observation, and photography to nearby underserved communities and visitors.

Cooperator(s):

Friends of the Wildlife Corridor, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas General Land Office, Texas Department of Transportation, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy-Texas, Texas Commission for Environmental Quality, Ducks Unlimited, The Peregrine Fund, Coastal Conservation Association-Texas Chapter, The Rio Grande Valley Nature Coalition, Partners for Conservation, and private landowners.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$1,000

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include fencing and posting of Refuge boundaries, which the Service would fund from the Refuge's base funding.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 3

Project / Unit: Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI

Congressional District(s): CT-2,5; MA-9; ME-1; NH-1,2; NY-19; RI-2

Location: Spans 10 Focus Areas in six northeastern states.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	250	\$1,500,000
Acquired to Date	222	\$383,000
Remaining to be Acquired	14,538	\$98,617,000

Project Description:

Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2016 to manage and protect young forest and shrubland habitat for the New England cottontail rabbit, ruffed grouse, American woodcock, monarch butterfly, box turtle, and other species that depend on young forest and shrubland. The Refuge is part of a larger landscape effort with state wildlife agencies and other partners in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island to protect and manage lands for young forest and shrubland habitat and the species that depend on those habitats. The Service plans to conserve 15,000 acres in 10 focus areas. Habitat restoration also benefits Federally listed endangered bog turtles and at-risk migratory birds including prairie warbler, blue-winged warbler, field sparrow, American woodcock, and brown thrasher. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation, nature interpretation, hunting, and fishing.

Purpose / Need:

The Service is in various stages of negotiations with willing sellers throughout the Refuge’s focus areas. The subject property is in a New England cottontail core area that contains the most viable population of the species remaining in New Hampshire. The parcel’s western boundary fronts over 2,000 feet along Fresh Creek, a tributary of the Salmon Falls River that offers excellent trout fishing opportunities. The parcel’s eastern boundary fronts a small county road, offering additional access for hunters, anglers, and other recreational users. The property is adjacent to large tracts of public and private conservation lands, providing the opportunity to work with partners to establish a network of trails for a variety of outdoor public recreational activities.

Cooperator(s):

States of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York; USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service; The Nature Conservancy; Trust for Public Land; Avalonia Land Conservancy (CT); Open Space Institute; Dutchess Land Conservancy (NY), Housatonic Valley Association; Harlem Valley Conservation Alliance (NY); Open Space

Institute (NY); Connecticut Audubon Society; York (ME) Land Trust; Kittery (ME) Land Trust; Great Works Regional Land Trust (ME); Maine Coast Heritage Trust; Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership (NH).

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 4

Project / Unit: Cache River National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): AR

Congressional District(s): AR-1

Location: Adjacent to the White and Cache Rivers and Bayou DeView, 75 miles northeast of Little Rock in Monroe, Prairie, Woodruff, Jackson, Cross, and Poinsett Counties.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	333	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	72,606	\$72,377,190
Remaining to be Acquired	213,331	\$532,556,155

Project Description:

Cache River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1986 to protect significant wetland habitats and provide critical feeding and resting areas for migrating and wintering waterfowl. As one of the few remaining areas in the Lower Mississippi River Valley not drastically altered by channelization and drainage, the Cache River basin contains a variety of wetland communities including some of the most intact and least disturbed bottomland hardwood forests in the Mississippi Valley region and is the most important wintering area for mallard ducks in North America. The exemplary quality and diversity of habitats attract a wide variety of fish and wildlife, including Federally listed and candidate species such as northern long-eared bat, eastern black rail, interior least tern, piping plover, and monarch butterfly. The wetlands have been designated by the Ramsar Convention as “Wetlands of International Importance.” The Refuge is a nationally renowned area for waterfowl hunting. The Refuge also provides other public wildlife dependent recreation, such as fishing, boating, wildlife observation, photography, and hiking. The Refuge is located within a very rural, economically depressed area of Arkansas, whose communities depend on the hunting and fishing opportunities provided by the Refuge.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the fee title acquisition of a 320-acre tract and start the phased acquisition of a 185-acre tract. The tracts are located within the floodplain of the Cache River and contain bottomland hardwood habitat consisting of extant and regenerating seasonally flooded forest, permanent hardwood swamp and ponds, moist-soil areas, and herbaceous wetlands. The tracts have high value foraging, migrating, and wintering habitat resources for waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, landbirds, and breeding habitat for wood duck and forest-interior birds. Conservation of these parcels will benefit a wide variety of fish and wildlife, potentially including Federally listed species such as northern long-eared bat, eastern black rail, red knot, piping plover, and monarch butterfly. Acquisition of the 320-acre parcel will reestablish public access around Bayou DeView. Acquisition of the parcel will also increase recreational use on 1,665 acres of existing Refuge lands and allow public access for hunting and fishing to

2,627 acres of State lands (Dagmar Wildlife Management Area) that are now blocked by a gated road. Two county roads serve the 185-acre tract, who’s phased acquisition will be started with the 2023 appropriations, and will provide public access for recreation.

Cooperator(s):

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, National Wild Turkey Federation, Arkansas Bow Hunters Association, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands, The Conservation Fund, Arbor Day Foundation, and Audubon Arkansas.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$500

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs are for maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 5

Project / Unit: Dakota Grassland Conservation Area

State(s): ND, SD

Congressional District(s): ND-AL, SD-AL

Location: South Dakota and North Dakota, lying east of the Missouri River.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	3,750	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	95,964	\$48,402,531
Remaining to be Acquired	111,334	\$84,079,250

Project Description:

The Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) ecosystem consists of large, unique grassland and wetland complexes that provide critical habitat for migratory birds, shorebirds, grassland birds, and other wildlife. Known as America’s “duck factory,” the PPR supports more than 50% of the total breeding population of North America’s migratory waterfowl. The prime breeding habitat for millions of ducks, the PPR includes parts of Iowa, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana, and can support upwards of 100 breeding duck pairs per square mile. The Dakota Grassland Conservation Area is part of a large-scale habitat conservation effort to protect this highly diverse and endangered ecosystem across the North and South Dakota portions of the PPR. The Service has made significant progress in protecting priority waterfowl habitat in the PPR, but further habitat fragmentation and degradation continues at an alarming rate. Approximately 81% of the remaining grassland and 65% of wetlands in the PPR have no form of permanent protection. The Service’s conservation easement acquisition program offers landowners a non-regulatory, financial incentive to permanently protect wildlife habitat on private lands in the PPR. Landscape-scale preservation of the rich mosaic of native grasslands and functional wetlands will bolster the ecosystem’s resiliency to climate change.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of wetland and grassland conservation easements from willing sellers on approximately 3,750 acres of grassland and wetland habitat in South Dakota and North Dakota. The funding leverages additional funding from Ducks Unlimited and other conservation partners. Acquisitions will benefit migratory birds, plants, and wildlife including Federally listed species such as piping plover, whooping crane, and Dakota skipper.

Cooperator(s):

North Dakota Game and Fish Department; North Dakota Natural Resources Trust; Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; The Nature Conservancy; and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$0

Describe O&M:

The Service is already monitoring existing easements in the area; the additional costs would be minimal.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 6

Project / Unit: Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

State(s): CT, MA, NH, VT

Congressional District(s): CT-1, CT-2, CT-3; MA-1, MA-2; NH-2; VT-AL

Location: Several focus areas within the Connecticut River Watershed.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	1,037	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	38,692	\$40,002,563
Remaining to be Acquired	57,504	\$85,997,437

Project Description:

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was authorized in 1991 as a landscape scale, watershed based, climate resilient, and partnership empowered land conservation collaboration to protect the Connecticut River Watershed. Land protection promotes ecological integrity, species diversity and reinforces ecosystem structure and function. The Refuge purpose is to conserve, protect, and enhance the Connecticut River Valley populations of Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, short-nosed sturgeon, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, osprey, black ducks, and other native species of plants, fish, and wildlife. Refuge Divisions span the rural-suburban-urban gradient creating opportunities to connect with underserved communities as well as economically depressed areas. The diverse array of compatible public access opportunities provided within the Watershed offer an array of avenues to connect people with nature.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of 1,037 acres in several focus areas within Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Many of the targeted tracts abut existing Refuge lands and other conservation lands, thereby enhancing connectivity for wildlife corridors and public recreation.

Within the total above, the Service plans to acquire a 33-acre parcel that is bounded on two sides by the tidally influenced freshwater wetland portion of the Salmon River and Pine Brook for the Salmon River Division (CT). Habitat conservation in this Division will help allow for the landward migration of the coastal wetland complex (brackish, and freshwater tidally influenced wetlands) due to climate change. The Service will also pursue a 6-acre property that will establish the Maromas Division in Connecticut.

The Service will also pursue the acquisition of three tracts totaling 97 acres within Massachusetts for the Dead Branch and the Fort River Divisions. Two of the tracts are along a high-quality segment of Dead Branch Brook within the Westfield River watershed that supports

an eastern brook trout fishery. The properties are considered by the State to be climate resilient and are dominated by mixed forest and scattered wetlands.

The Service will acquire a conservation easement on 300 acres for the Mascoma Division in New Hampshire that allows habitat management and public access. The Service will also acquire a 101-acre tract for the Pondicherry Division. The properties contain a mosaic of unfragmented habitats that contribute to the larger core of undeveloped land within the landscape.

The Service will acquire a 500-acre parcel for the West River Division (VT) that provides important stopover habitat for migrating landbirds as well as breeding habitat. The forested areas provide breeding habitat for species of conservation concern such as the wood thrush, blackburnian warbler, Canada warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, and American woodcock. There is potential breeding and foraging habitat for American black duck, wood duck, and other waterfowl species within and around the wetlands (conifer swamp, shrub-swamp, floodplain forest, and freshwater marsh), on and near the subject property and the adjacent open water area.

Cooperator(s):

States of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as well as local communities. The Friends of Conte, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Kestrel Land Trust, Middlesex Land Trust, and WildLandscapes International. The four-state congressional delegation provides letters of support annually.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$7,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 7

Project / Unit: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): IA, MN

Congressional District(s): IA-1, IA-2, IA-3, IA-4, MN-1, MN-7

Location: Located in portions of 37 counties in IA and 48 in MN, the Refuge is bounded by the U.S.-Canada border to the north and Des Moines, IA, to the south. The Refuge boundary weaves through the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands and Agassiz Beach Ridges of northwest MN and the Prairie Coteau regions of southwest MN and northwest IA.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	100	\$500,000
Acquired to Date	12,250	\$8,402,841
Remaining to be Acquired	64,650	\$99,736,125

Project Description:

The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2000 to address the loss of America’s grasslands and the decline of grassland wildlife. Scientists estimate the original tallgrass prairie in Minnesota and Iowa covered about 25 million acres. Now, there are only about 300,000 acres left in the two states. The Refuge was created to work with individuals, groups, and government agencies to permanently preserve and restore some of the northern tallgrass prairie. The Refuge’s long-term goal is to protect 77,000 acres.

Federally listed threatened and endangered species on the Refuge include four plant and seven animal species, including western prairie fringed orchid, prairie bush clover, Topeka shiner, rusty patch bumblebee, and piping plover. Several globally rare species can also be found on the Refuge, including the last remaining U.S. populations of the Dakota skipper and regal fritillary butterflies, which are in steep decline. The Refuge consists of many permanent, temporary, and seasonal wetlands crucial to national waterfowl, waterbird, and shorebird populations. These same water resources provide groundwater recharge supply and mitigates for the severity and risk of downstream flooding.

The many units of the Refuge are accessible to numerous diverse communities for public recreation such as fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, and photography.

Purpose / Need:

The Service is planning to acquire two or more tracts of land totaling 100 acres of fee title or conservation easement in northwestern Iowa and/or western Minnesota for the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. Acquisitions of fee title will increase public recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

NGO conservation partners in Iowa and Minnesota will leverage acquisitions by providing matching funds, cost-share opportunities, or donating land. In Iowa, the Service works closely with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) and Iowa Department of Natural Resources to purchase and manage tracts of land. In Minnesota, The Nature Conservancy actively provides funding to help restore recently purchased tracts. Some of these land donations are made possible by State of Minnesota grants and, per State law, are immediately open for public hunting and fishing. Acquisition will increase public wildlife observation, education, and photography opportunities. Due to the length of the Refuge, access to units is enjoyed by many diverse communities.

Cooperator(s):

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR), the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF), Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, county conservation boards, and local Chambers of Commerce.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$1,250	\$1,000

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include initial restoration and posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include habitat management and enhancement work (spraying, mowing, prescribed burns).

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 8

Project / Unit: Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): TX

Congressional District(s): TX-34

Location: South Texas: Lower Rio Grande Valley – Cameron and Willacy Counties.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	1,250	\$4,000,000
Acquired to Date	97,737	\$25,985,732
Remaining to be Acquired	54,327	\$121,727,564

Project Description:

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1946 to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl and other migratory birds, principally redhead ducks. Today, there is an expanded emphasis that includes endangered species conservation and management for shorebirds. Nearly half of all the bird species found in the continental United States rest, feed, nest, or migrate on or through Refuge lands, making it a premiere bird-watching destination. The Refuge contains the largest population of the endangered ocelots in the United States and is important for conservation and recovery efforts for this endangered cat. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation such as wildlife watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and environmental education in a state with limited public lands.

Purpose / Need:

With the requested funding, the Service would begin the phased acquisition of an 8,000-acre ranch that is bordered on three sides by the Refuge. The remaining boundary lies along 10.5 miles of the Laguna Madre. Federally listed sea turtles forage in nearshore seagrass beds in the Laguna Madre and nest nearby on South Padre Island. The undisturbed shorelines and wetlands are ideal for waterfowl, gull-billed and royal terns, reddish egrets, black skimmers, piping plovers, red knots, and American oystercatchers. The property also supports tidal, saline, brackish, freshwater oxbows, and marshes, each of which are important habitats for wintering migratory waterfowl and neotropical birds. The native, Tamaulipan brush supports one of the last remaining breeding populations of the ocelot in the United States and meets a significant recovery action for the species. The property also contains habitat for the Federally listed endangered Aplomado falcon and could support breeding populations while providing a haven for many native wildlife species. Acquiring the property will protect coastal, vegetative, and wetland habitats, and maintain an intact ecosystem, enhancing biodiversity. Acquisition will also expand public wildlife-dependent recreational uses such as hunting, wildlife observation, and photography to nearby underserved communities and visitors.

Cooperator(s):

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas General Land Office, Texas Department of Transportation, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy-Texas, Ocean Trust, Texas Commission for Environmental Quality, Ducks Unlimited, The Peregrine Fund, Coastal Conservation Association-Texas Chapter, The Rio Grande Valley Nature Coalition, and the Partners for Conservation.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$300

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary posting. Annual costs include monitoring activities.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 9

Project / Unit: Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-1

Location: Tehama County, 18 miles southeast of Redbluff.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	285	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	11,755	\$29,545,592
Remaining to be Acquired	6,460	\$62,450,000

Project Description:

Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1989 and consists of multiple units along an 80-mile stretch of the Sacramento River between Red Bluff and Princeton, in Tehama, Butte, Glenn, and Colusa Counties. Many of the units have been restored by converting flood-prone agricultural lands into riparian habitats in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, River Partners, and many other cooperating partners. The riparian habitat along the Sacramento River is critically important for fish, migratory birds, plants, and river system health. It provides shelter for many songbirds and water-associated animals, including the river otter, turtles, beaver, American pelicans, ospreys, and migratory songbirds. Several threatened, endangered, and sensitive species can be found on the Refuge including Chinook salmon, valley elderberry longhorn beetle, western yellow-billed cuckoo, Swainson's hawk, and bank swallow. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including fishing, boating, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, and photography.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of a 285-acre tract located in Tehama County. Tehama County has underserved and non-English speaking communities; the population includes 25% Hispanic or Latino persons and 16.3% of the population lives below the poverty level. The tract, which has extensive frontage on the Sacramento River, will provide public recreational opportunities, such as fishing, boating, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, and photography for the residents of Tehama County and visitors. The tract will provide potential habitat for the Federally listed as threatened western yellow-billed cuckoo and the riparian forest will provide a shade screen for winter and spring run Chinook salmon.

Cooperator(s):

Tehama County, the Sacramento River Forum, The Nature Conservancy, AltaCal Audubon Society, River Partners, Northern California Water Association, California Department of Parks and Recreation, and California Department of Water Resources.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$3,000	\$3,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs will include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 10

Project / Unit: Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

State(s): FL

Congressional District(s): FL-12, FL-15, FL-16

Location: Approximately 50 miles south of Orlando and 75 miles east of Tampa, in Okeechobee County.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	1,259	\$4,000,000
Acquired to Date	8,994	\$20,539,594
Remaining to be Acquired	141,823	\$449,774,697

Project Description:

Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area contains the headwaters of the greater Everglades ecosystem, protecting a combination of wetland and upland habitats supporting migratory birds, Federal and State listed species (143), and regionally important wildlife and plant communities within the Kissimmee River Basin. Habitats include a mosaic of seasonally wet grasslands, longleaf pine savannas, sandhill and scrub, and forested wetlands that support numerous imperiled plants and animals and connect landscapes for a wide array of species including Florida panther, Florida black bear, Audubon’s crested caracara, and Florida grasshopper sparrow. Easements acquired within the Conservation Area protect Florida’s cattle ranching heritage and fee acquisitions for the Refuge provide public outdoor recreational opportunities, including opportunities for underserved communities.

Purpose / Need:

The Service is working with willing sellers to acquire two conservation easements totaling 1,259 acres. Refuge acquisitions are strongly supported by a variety of partners and stakeholders and support the military readiness goals of the Avon Park Air Force Range and their Sentinel Landscape conservation efforts, offering potential cost sharing opportunities. Acquisitions will help the Everglades ecosystem become a more connected and functional conservation landscape that will provide effective habitat connections between existing conservation areas and allow habitats and species to shift in response to urban development pressures and climate change. Conservation easements help preserve one of Florida’s last working rural landscapes, protecting a unique regional landscape, trust resources, and the local economy. Acquisitions also contribute to safeguarding water supply for millions of Floridians and marine life by protecting groundwater recharge areas; holding and treating surface water runoff, which significantly contributes to efforts to protect and restore watersheds to reduce fresh and saltwater algae blooms.

Cooperator(s):

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Florida Sportsman's Trust; Florida Cattlemen's Association; National Wildlife Refuge Association. Open Space Institute. Ducks Unlimited. U.S. Department of Defense; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Okeechobee, Osceola, Highlands and Polk Counties; and The Nature Conservancy.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$12,000	\$10,000

Describe O&M:

Annual costs are for monitoring.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 11

Project / Unit: Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): PA

Congressional District(s): PA-17

Location: 60 miles north of Philadelphia in Monroe County.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	500	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	5,472	\$6,519,750
Remaining to be Acquired	13,215	\$86,300,000

Project Description:

Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in December 2008 for the conservation of migratory birds and wildlife, and the habitats they depend on. The Refuge provides a diverse mosaic of wetland and upland habitats that support five Federally listed threatened or endangered species such as the bog turtle and Indiana bat. The Kittatinny Ridge (which flanks the south side of the valley) has been designated an Important Bird Area by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society and is a well-known migration flyway that concentrates up to 20,000 migrating raptors and more than 140 bird species every Fall. Large blocks of unfragmented forest along the ridge also serve as valuable breeding areas for interior-forest birds such as ruffed grouse, wood thrush, Eastern wood pewee, scarlet tanager, black-throated blue warbler, and worm-eating warbler. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, and wildlife viewing.

Purpose / Need:

The Service is planning to acquire approximately 500 acres in five tracts. These forested uplands, wetlands, and riparian areas will provide crucial habitat for native wildlife, including the Federally listed as threatened bog turtle and migratory birds of conservation concern. These tracts include lands on the Kittatinny Ridge, an Important Bird Area, and along Cherry Creek. These proposed tracts are adjacent to existing Refuge lands. Acquisition will expand public recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, photography, hunting, hiking, and environmental education.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service (Appalachian National Scenic Trail), Pocono Natural Heritage Trust, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Monroe County, Open Space Institute, and Wildlands Conservancy.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 12

Project / Unit: Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area

State(s): ND, SD

Congressional District(s): ND-AL, SD-AL

Location: South Dakota east of the James River Valley and 3 counties in the southeast corner of North Dakota.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	1,000	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	77,666	\$20,377,551
Remaining to be Acquired	106,334	\$84,079,250

Project Description:

Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area was established in 2000 to preserve quality tallgrass prairie habitat in southeastern North Dakota and eastern South Dakota to help maintain biodiversity and to slow habitat fragmentation. The plan for the Wildlife Management Area is to use conservation easements to protect 185,000 acres of the remaining tallgrass prairie in the eastern Dakotas. Tallgrass prairies support a rich variety of plant, animal, and insect species, including more than 147 species of breeding birds, ranging from neotropical migrants to waterfowl. In some areas, breeding waterfowl densities exceed 100 pairs per square mile. The habitat supports several Federally listed species, including the threatened Dakota skipper, endangered Powesiek skipperling, and monarch butterfly. The tallgrass prairie ecosystem also supports grassland bird species, including Baird’s sparrow, loggerhead shrike, and ferruginous hawk. Perpetual conservation easements preserve ecological functions by providing floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, improved water quality, and reduced soil erosion.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of perpetual wetland and grassland easements from willing sellers on approximately 1,000 acres of tallgrass prairie. Acquisition of perpetual easements protects important habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife, while maintaining ranching and other traditional working operations.

Cooperator(s):

North Dakota Game and Fish; Pheasants Forever; Audubon; Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; The Nature Conservancy; and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$1,000

Describe O&M:

Annual costs include monitoring activities.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 13

Project / Unit: Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): IL, WI

Congressional District(s): IL-14, WI-1

Location: Walworth County, Wisconsin and McHenry County, Illinois.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	200	\$1,100,000
Acquired to Date	214	\$365,000
Remaining to be Acquired	11,192	\$61,556,000

Project Description:

Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2012 and is an urban refuge that is centrally located between the communities of Chicago and Rockford, Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is a conservation and outreach hub for the 12 million people that reside within these communities. The Refuge purposes include the protection, restoration, and management of remnant oak savannah, tallgrass prairie, riparian corridors, and wetlands. Of the ecosystems that once defined this area, less than 0.01% of the tallgrass prairie and 12% of remnant oak ecosystems remain. The Refuge complements state and local plans, including the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision; the Chicago Wilderness Oak Ecosystem Recovery Plan; the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan; the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan; Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan; the Grassland Bird Conservation Design in the Chicago Region; the McHenry County Green Infrastructure Network; and the Nippersink Watershed Initiative.

The Refuge provides habitat for breeding migratory birds such as Henslow’s sparrows, bobolink, and eastern meadowlark, and several Federally listed endangered and threatened species, including prairie bush clover, eastern prairie fringed orchid, whooping crane, and rusty patch bumblebee. Public recreational opportunities include migratory bird, small and upland game, and big game hunting, as well as fishing, hiking, birding, photography, environmental interpretation, and education.

Purpose / Need:

The Service is planning to acquire several tracts totaling 200 acres in fee title. One targeted tract is located near Richmond High School where the Service is working with the school to incorporate restoration benefits within the high school educational curriculum and to engage youth in restoration planting. Acquisition will expand public recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, photography, environmental interpretation, and education, in an urban area.

Cooperator(s):

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Openlands, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, Ducks Unlimited, McHenry County Conservation District, McHenry County Conservation Foundation, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, Geneva Lake Conservancy, Nippersink Watershed Association, Kettle Moraine Land Trust, Illinois Audubon Society, county conservation boards, and local Chambers of Commerce.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$12,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs would include restoration, development of public access points, and posting of boundary signs. Annual expenses include habitat management such as spraying, mowing, brush removal, and prescribed burns.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 14

Project / Unit: Grasslands Wildlife Management Area

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-16

Location: Located in the Pacific Flyway between the Cities of Los Banos and Gustine.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	200	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	94,997	\$66,318,161
Remaining to be Acquired	38,133	\$152,330,200

Project Description:

The Grasslands Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established in 1979 and is composed mostly of conservation easements. Perpetual conservation easements preserve wetland and grassland habitats, while allowing wildlife-friendly agricultural operations. Fee acquisition allows for habitat restoration as well as protection of water quality and quantity. The WMA supports diverse habitats including seasonally flooded marshlands, semi-permanent marshes, riparian habitats, wet meadows, vernal pools, native uplands, pastures, and native grasslands. These wetlands constitute 30% of the remaining wetlands in California's Central Valley and are extremely important to Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations. In addition to waterfowl, these habitats support shorebirds, wading birds, songbirds, raptors, and other wildlife species.

Purpose / Need:

The Service is targeting the fee title acquisition of two tracts totaling 200 acres, including water rights. Acquisition will allow for improved management of adjacent Service lands and will contribute to the long-term viability of the grassland and wetland ecosystems providing a haven for migratory birds and other wildlife species.

Cooperator(s):

California Department of Fish & Wildlife, River Partners, Ducks Unlimited, California Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and Western Rivers Conservancy.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs will include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 15

Project / Unit: Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

State(s): AK

Congressional District(s): AK-AL

Location: State of Alaska

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	22,691	\$2,800,000
Acquired to Date	6,915,087	\$11,251,773
Remaining to be Acquired	24,412	\$12,206,000

Project Description:

The Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) consolidated and created many national wildlife refuges. ANILCA also defined the five purposes of each Refuge: 1) Conserve the refuge’s animal populations and habitats in their natural biodiversity including, but not limited to marine mammals, marine birds and other migratory birds, the marine resources upon which they rely, bears, caribou, and other animals. 2) Fulfill international treaty obligations of the United States relating to fish and wildlife and their habitats. 3) Provide opportunities for continued subsistence uses by local residents. 4) Conduct national and international scientific research on marine resources. 5) Ensure water quality and quantity within the Refuge (to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with purpose number 1).

The Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge presents a breathtakingly dramatic landscape made up of active volcanoes, towering mountain peaks, rolling tundra and rugged, wave-battered coastlines. As is the case with most of Alaska's coastal refuges, salmon provide the principal "nutrient engine" for Alaska Peninsula, supporting the species that prey upon them and enriching the rivers and surrounding lands after they spawn and die. Where there are salmon, there will usually be bears, and when the fish are running, Ugashik Lakes and the streams that surround them attract brown bears in great numbers. Other large land mammals include wolverine, the caribou of the approximately 7,000-animal Northern Alaska Peninsula Herd, wolves, and moose. Refuge lands are also home to almost 40% of the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run, the largest sustainable sockeye fishery in the world. The Refuge offers a variety of public recreational opportunities, such as sport fishing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, boating, camping, and wildlife observation and photography.

ANILCA combined 11 previously established refuges with 1.9 million acres of additional lands to form the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge's 3.4 million acres include the spectacular volcanic islands of the Aleutian chain, the seabird cliffs of the remote Pribilof Islands, and icebound lands washed by the Chukchi Sea. Swirling clouds of seabirds, rare Asiatic migrant birds, beaches of bellowing sea lions and fur seals, and salmon streams in

abundance are a few of the wildlife highlights on the Refuge. The Refuge is perhaps most unique for: the sheer abundance of life (40,000,000 seabirds), species and subspecies found nowhere else (6 subspecies of rock ptarmigan are found only in the Aleutians), endangered and threatened marine mammals (Steller sea lion and otters), threats from invasive species (rats, fox, cattle, and marine invertebrates), and the possibility that new species are yet to be found among the remote and rugged 2,500 rocks, reefs, and islands of the Refuge. The Refuge provides public recreational access for wildlife viewing and photography, as well as recreational and subsistence hunting.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the phased acquisition of a 32,000-acre tract for Alaska Peninsula NWR and will acquire a 2,691-acre conservation easement for Alaska Maritime NWR.

The Alaska Peninsula NWR acquisition will provide protection for the watershed that feeds Chignik fisheries and a nearby lagoon, thereby increasing water quality and quantity for Bristol Bay sockeye salmon. Acquisition will also expand public recreational opportunities, such as sport fishing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, boating, camping and wildlife observation and photography.

Near the Native Village of Point Lay, 40,000 to 50,000 Chukchi Sea walrus, mostly adult females and their calves, crowd on the beach. Acquisition of a conservation easement will facilitate research into responses to climate change; provide access to study the retreat of sea ice; protect walruses from harassment and the potential for stampeding, which can result in trampling of calves; enhance partnering with the local Tribe in the stewardship of the walruses; and facilitate walrus monitoring and conservation before they become listed as an endangered species.

Cooperator(s):

The Great Land Trust and Chignik Lagoon Native Corporation, The Cully Corporation, and The Conservation Fund.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Annual costs include signage, easement monitoring, overflights, and enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 16

Project / Unit: Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): AR

Congressional District(s): AR-4

Location: Ashley County in southeast Arkansas.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	1,500	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	67,725	\$3,825,188
Remaining to be Acquired	27,523	\$51,455,272

Project Description:

Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1975, contains an abundance of water resources dominated by the Ouachita and Saline Rivers and the Felsenthal Pool. The low-lying areas are dissected by an intricate system of rivers, creeks, sloughs, buttonbush swamps, and lakes throughout a vast bottomland hardwood forest that gradually rises to an upland forest community. Historically, periodic flooding of the "bottoms" during winter and spring provided excellent wintering waterfowl habitat. These wetlands, in combination with the pine and upland hardwood forest on the higher ridges, support a wide diversity of native plants and animals. The Refuge provides wintering habitat for hundreds of thousands of migrating waterfowl. Refuge lands are also used by neotropical migratory birds following the Ouachita River during their spring and fall migrations. The Refuge provides nesting habitat for prothonotary, Swainson's, and worm-eating warblers, Mississippi kites, and wood ducks. The Refuge also provides habitat for priority species such as black bear, Rafinesque's big-eared bat, southeastern myotis and the Federally listed red-cockaded woodpecker. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation, such as wildlife-viewing, hunting, fishing, boating, and camping. These activities support nearby rural and underserved communities that are dependent upon Refuge hunting and fishing opportunities.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the phased acquisition of a 2,500-acre tract that is adjacent to the main unit of the Refuge. Acquisition will increase the core forest block of the Refuge dominated by bottomland hardwood forest, upland pine, and mixed pine-hardwood forest to the benefit of black bear, bats, migratory songbirds, and other wildlife. Conservation of these parcels will benefit a wide variety of fish and wildlife species, including Federally listed wildlife such as red-cockaded woodpecker, northern long-eared bat, and monarch butterfly. There is also the possible presence of two Federally listed plant species, the endangered Pondberry and the threatened Geocarpon. This project increases the forest buffer along the Ouachita River to improve water quality for regional fisheries and four endangered/threatened mussels.

Acquisition will enhance public recreation opportunities, including hiking, sport fishing, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, and hunting.

Cooperator(s):

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Arkansas Bow Hunters Association, The Conservation Fund, The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and local hunting and fishing groups.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$2,500

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include boundary marking, gates, and road/access needs. Annual costs include maintenance and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 17

Project / Unit: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): FL

Congressional District(s): FL-4

Location: In the Florida Panhandle, 24 miles south of Tallahassee, in Wakulla and Jefferson Counties.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	700	\$2,000,000
Acquired to Date	82,838	\$21,985,732
Remaining to be Acquired	28,044	\$61,258,715

Project Description:

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1931 to provide wintering habitat for migratory birds. It encompasses over 80,000 acres spread out between Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties, and includes about 43 miles along the Gulf Coast of northwest Florida. The Refuge contains upland pine forest, wetland, hardwood forest, pine plantation, shrub and brush land, and freshwater marsh habitat. The Refuge is within a designated Important Bird Area and a Land Management and Research Demonstration Site for Longleaf Pine Ecosystems. The Refuge includes coastal marshes, islands, tidal creeks, and estuaries of seven north Florida rivers, and is home to a diverse community of plant and animal life. Wildlife includes numerous federal threatened, endangered, and at-risk species, including frosted flatwoods salamanders, red-cockaded woodpeckers, wood storks, eastern black rails, red knots, piping plovers, Florida manatees, gulf sturgeon, gopher tortoises, Florida pine snakes, spotted turtles, American oystercatchers, Wilson’s plovers, and least terns, and loggerhead, green, Kemp’s ridley, and leatherback sea turtles. The Refuge also has strong ties to a rich cultural past, and is home to the St. Marks Lighthouse, which was built in 1842 (current tower) and is still in use today. Over 17,000 acres are protected under the Wilderness Act of 1964 including a designated Globally Important Bird Area. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including to underserved communities, by offering hiking, hunting, photography, wildlife viewing, environmental education, and interpretation.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will acquire approximately 700 acres from one willing seller. The acquisition will secure habitat for Federally listed threatened and endangered species including the red-cockaded woodpecker, wood stork, and frosted flatwoods salamanders. The site already includes a historical salamander pond and ephemeral wetlands that could be improved to benefit salamanders. This project is particularly important to buffer the impacts of sea level rise due to climate change on these species since it will allow for migration inland. The lands provide important Florida black bear habitat, including corridors to link critical habitats for major

population centers, and will benefit wading birds, shorebirds, marsh birds, Neotropical migrants, and other high priority migratory birds. This acquisition will provide public wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities and will improve recreational access to existing Refuge lands.

Cooperator(s):

The Sam Shine Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance, Ducks Unlimited, Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society, The Florida Natural Areas Inventory, St. Marks Refuge Association, Florida Trail Association, Apalachee Audubon Society, Florida Wildlife Federation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Forest Service, Tall Timbers Research Station, and the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$3,000	\$11,000

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management and restoration, prescribed burning, maintenance, and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 18

Project / Unit: Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): WA

Congressional District(s): WA-3

Location: Pacific County, near the community of Long Beach.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	1,012	\$3,500,000
Acquired to Date	17,671	\$17,688,079
Remaining to be Acquired	8,059	\$24,177,000

Project Description:

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to protect migrating birds and their habitat. The Refuge has grown to encompass diverse ecosystems including salt marsh, muddy tidelands, forest, freshwater wetlands, streams, grasslands, coastal dunes, and beaches. This rich mix of habitats provides places for over 200 bird species to rest, nest, and winter, and benefits chum salmon, river otter, Roosevelt elk, bobcat, and over a dozen species of amphibians. The Refuge provides public recreation opportunities such as hiking, wildlife viewing, and shellfish harvesting.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of several portions of timber tracts. Acquisitions will focus on upland forest habitats that provide nesting habitat for the Federally listed threatened marbled murrelet. Other species that benefit from forest protection include black bear, blacktail deer, Roosevelt elk, salamanders, forest-dwelling bats and other small mammals, forest birds, and a host of fungi and gastropods. Protecting upland habitat will also protect water quality for streams and Willapa Bay.

Cooperator(s):

The Nature Conservancy, Western Rivers Conservancy, the Columbia Land Trust, and Forterra.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$30,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary posting. Annual costs include routine law enforcement patrol and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 19

Project / Unit: Montana Conservation Areas (Rocky Mountain Front CA/Blackfoot Valley CA/
Lost Trail CA/Swan Valley CA)

State(s): MT

Congressional District(s): MT-AL

Location: Western Montana.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	16,000	\$12,000,000
Acquired to Date	0	\$0
Remaining to be Acquired	100,000	\$65,000,000

Project Description:

The Lost Trail, Rocky Mountain Front, Blackfoot Valley, and Swan Valley Conservation Areas surround one of the largest wilderness areas in the continental United States. The Conservation Areas protect a wild landscape of sage steppe, mixed grass prairie, montane forest, lakes, and rivers.

As one of the newest units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Lost Trail Conservation Area (LTCA) represents state-of-the-art conservation design. LTCA encompasses 100,000 acres of private forestland surrounding Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge. The LTCA boundary was drawn to include the migration corridor for an elk herd that winters on the Flathead Indian Reservation and is significant to the Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai. LTCA also includes a Federally identified grizzly bear migration corridor, allowing for critical movement and genetic diversity identified in the species recovery report.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on approximately 16,000 acres at LTCA. The easement will protect critical habitat and migration corridors for grizzly bear, elk, and other iconic species, as well as guarantee continued public recreational access and traditional native uses in perpetuity, something that has drawn near universal support from Tribal partners, local government officials, hunting groups, conservation groups, and residents.

Cooperator(s):

Trust for Public Land; Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Lincoln and Flathead County Commissioners; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; The Nature Conservancy; The Conservation Fund; and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$2,500

Describe O&M:

There are no startup costs for the conservation easement. Annual costs are primarily for travel and monitoring of the conservation easement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 20

Project / Unit: Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): IN

Congressional District(s): IN - 8

Location: Pike and Gibson Counties in southwestern Indiana.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	764	\$2,500,000
Acquired to Date	10,625	\$9,210,000
Remaining to be Acquired	11,497	\$37,626,910

Project Description:

Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1994 to protect one of two remaining intact floodplain forest systems within Indiana and improve the water quality of the Patoka River. The Refuge protects wetlands, floodplain forest, and uplands along 30 miles of the Patoka River corridor for the benefit of migratory birds, fish, and wildlife, including Federally listed endangered species such as the Indiana bat and the interior least tern. The Refuge is located near the diverse communities of Evansville and Indianapolis, Indiana, and Louisville, Kentucky, and provides public access for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue phased acquisition of a 1,650-acre tract. The tract consists of bottomland forests and wetlands that provide habitat for waterfowl, waterbirds, and landbirds, along with associated upland forests and grasslands that provide habitat for Indiana bats. The tract is adjacent to the Patoka River; restoration of farmed land to natural habitat will increase water quality. The tract is easily accessible from county roads and will enhance public access to existing Refuge lands as well as expand public recreational activities, such as wildlife observation, photography, hunting, and fishing.

Cooperator(s):

Ducks Unlimited, Friends of Patoka Refuge, Sycamore Land Trust, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, Indiana Department of Transportation, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Duke Energy, Evansville Chapter of the Audubon Society, and USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$50,000

Describe O&M:

Startup costs posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include maintenance, law enforcement, and habitat management, including restoration of agricultural lands to natural habitat. Some costs for restoration and habitat enhancement projects are shared with conservation partners.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 21

Project / Unit: San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-16

Location: Stanislaus County, approximately 10 miles southwest of Modesto.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	205	\$2,000,000
Acquired to Date	11,508	\$51,302,794
Remaining to be Acquired	13,103	\$99,072,500

Project Description:

Established in 1987, San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge is situated where three major rivers (Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin) join in the San Joaquin Valley, creating a mix of habitats that provide ideal conditions for high wildlife and plant diversity. The Refuge was initially established primarily to protect and manage habitat for the Aleutian cackling goose—a then Federally listed endangered species. Today, the Refuge is managed with a focus on migratory birds and endangered species that includes Swainson’s hawks that nest in the canopy of tall cottonwood trees; herons and cormorants that form communal nesting colonies within the tops of the large valley oaks; and the endangered riparian brush rabbits that have been re-introduced to the restored habitat from captive-reared populations. The woodlands also support a diversity of breeding songbirds including grosbeaks, orioles, flycatchers, and warblers, as well as the least Bell’s vireo—an endangered species that had last nested in the San Joaquin Valley more than five decades ago. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation, such as fishing, wildlife viewing, and photography.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the acquisition of two tracts totaling 205-acres. Acquisitions will benefit Federally listed species, including endangered riparian brush rabbit, riparian woodrat, least Bell’s vireo, Central Valley spring run Chinook salmon, and giant garter snake. With the help of several partners, the Service will restore riparian floodplain, which supports flood attenuation during seasonal high water events. Acquisition will also expand public recreational opportunities, such as fishing, boating, and wildlife observation, for Stanislaus County’s underserved, non-English speaking, and other communities.

Cooperator(s):

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks, Oakland Zoo, River Partners, Ducks Unlimited, California Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and Point Blue Conservation Science.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs to include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 22

Project / Unit: Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-21

Location: 35 miles northwest of Bakersfield, in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	100	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	4,439	\$8,891,554
Remaining to be Acquired	17,461	\$86,804,900

Project Description:

The Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area was established in 2009 with plans for eventual protection of 22,000 acres in an area between Kern and Pixley National Wildlife Refuges. Ninety percent of the land in the WMA will be conserved through the purchase of conservation easements from willing landowners. The Kern/Tulare Basin provides vital wintering and staging areas for northern pintail and other Pacific Flyway waterfowl. Dry upland habitats that are protected in association with wetlands are important to many types of wildlife.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the fee title acquisition of a 100-acre tract. The acquisition will benefit existing populations of State or Federally listed ESA species such as San Joaquin kit fox, Tipton kangaroo rat, and blunt-nosed leopard lizard. In addition to protecting upland habitat at the WMA, ownership of upland parcels near the Kern National Wildlife Refuge provides a buffer around wetlands at the Refuge.

Cooperator(s):

Tulare Basin Wetlands Association, California Waterfowl Association, California Outdoor Heritage Alliance, and the many groups associated with the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2023

Priority: 23

Project / Unit: Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

State(s): MO

Congressional District(s): MO-1, MO-2, MO-3, MO-4, MO-5, MO-6

Location: In the floodplain of the Missouri River from Kansas City to St Louis.

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
Estimate for FY 2023	188	\$429,000
Acquired to Date	18,312	\$9,188,703
Remaining to be Acquired	41,435	\$22,200,000

Project Description:

The historic Missouri River, nicknamed "Big Muddy" because of its murky, sediment-filled waters, serves as beneficial habitat for many wildlife species. The river's ability to carve through floodplains and create side channels, wetlands, and oxbow lakes has attracted and sustained wildlife since the retreat of glaciers from the region thousands of years ago. Drastic changes began to occur on the Missouri River soon after the journey of Lewis and Clark described its wildlife to the world in the early 1800s. Over the next century hundreds of steamships sank in the river and efforts began to control it. By the 1980s, over 700 miles of river had been channelized, reducing risks but also crucial habitat. Because of this and further damage by major flooding, the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established in 1994 for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources. The Refuge stretches across the entire State of Missouri, connecting four of the top five most populated cities in the state and running parallel to U.S. Interstate 70, which is the most traveled road in Missouri with 28,000 vehicles using just the rural sections each day, and 60 percent of the state's population living within 30 miles. The Refuge encompasses river features, such as islands, chutes, bends, and tributary confluences. Refuge purposes include reconnecting the Missouri River and its tributaries to their floodplains, restoring hydrology, returning native vegetation, reducing invasive species, and offering a variety of wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities.

Purpose / Need:

The Service will pursue the fee title acquisition of 188 acres from multiple willing sellers. Acquisitions will improve access to existing Refuge lands and expand recreational opportunities and provide habitat for migratory birds, fish, and wildlife.

The Service will protect and restore bottomland forest and Missouri River floodplain for the benefit of numerous endangered and protected species, including pallid sturgeon, least tern, and a host of mussel species. Restored floodplains will mitigate flooding events for downstream communities. Restoration of lands is vital to the survival of native species and will involve

partnerships with landowners to keep working lands intact. Newly acquired lands will enhance and expand access for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for diverse communities in urban and rural areas.

Cooperator(s):

Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Mysun Charitable Foundation, Great Rivers Greenway, Conservation Federation of Missouri, Audubon Missouri, Ray and Jackson Counties, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Savings/Costs	Startup	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$1,500

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary posting. Annual costs include habitat management (spraying, mowing, etc.) and routine law enforcement patrol and maintenance.